



## **The Little Limo That Could...**

A year ago, U.S. Navy veteran Leonard Lehman saw a television news broadcast about an upcoming veterans business conference called Operation: Start Up & Grow. Leonard had been driving limousines for other companies for 17 years, and since he had always wanted to have his own business, he made it a point to attend the conference two weeks later. Leonard found a lot of the information he needed to pursue his dream and said to himself, "I think I can do this."

While starting a business is never easy, Leonard found the tools available at Operation: Start Up & Grow helped him along the way. The Syracuse SCORE Chapter assisted him in developing a thorough business plan and financial projections. Leonard found financing to purchase a black SUV limousine with an SBA-backed Patriot Express loan from Adirondack Bank.

"Other banks didn't want to take the risk on me because I was a startup, even though I had 17 years of experience in the industry. I was very happy working with Mike Shaler at Adirondack Bank and with the interest rate on my loan," said Leonard of his loan experience. "It was a lot of paperwork, but it was worth it."

Three months after attending the 2008 Operation: Start Up & Grow conference, Leonard opened the doors of Legacy Limousines in Clinton, New York with a focus on offering top service at reasonable prices for his customers. After years of working for other limousine company owners in the area, Leonard knew the average prices for limousine service and stayed within a competitive range. Legacy Limousines provides transportation for weddings, proms, Finger Lake wine tours, and concerts as well as to the Albany, Syracuse and Rochester airports.

Legacy Limousines will soon be celebrating its first anniversary and with Leonard's leadership, the company has achieved profitability and a great reputation in Central New York. Leonard's donated limousine service for charitable events such as the Alzheimer's Walk and the Diabetes Association events has helped add to his best form of advertising-"word-of-mouth". With over 55 satisfied customers, Legacy Limousines has a head start on the road to success.

In March, Leonard attended the 2009 Operation: Start Up & Grow conference to network with other veteran business owners and learn new ideas to optimize his business. "If I didn't go to the first conference, I wouldn't be living my dream right now. The tools I found at the conference were excellent and helped me start my business. It's a lot of work but I think anyone can do it if they put their mind to it," commented Leonard.